

To: City Executive Board

Date: 10 September 2015

Report of: Scrutiny Committee

Title of Report: Leisure & Wellbeing Strategy 2015-20

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee on the Leisure & Wellbeing Strategy

Key decision? Yes

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Craig Simmons

Executive lead member: Councillor Mike Rowley, Board Member for Leisure, Parks and Sport

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan priority – Strong & Active Communities

Recommendation of the Scrutiny Committee to the City Executive Board:

That the City Executive Board states whether it agrees or disagrees with the following recommendations:

1. That the City Council looks into extending the functionality of its mobile apps to enable leisure bookings.

2. That the City Council's Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy includes a greater emphasis on strengthening integration between leisure centres and the broader leisure offer, including community centres.

3. That the City Council continues to monitor the accessibility of leisure provision across Oxford, including in those parts of the city that have no swimming pools within a 20 walk, such as Littlemore and Cowley, and how this relates to leisure target groups (the Committee noted that corporate performance measure LP106: To increase participation at our leisure centres by target groups was below target for 2015/16 quarter 1).

Introduction

1. The Scrutiny Committee reviewed the Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy at its public meeting on 7 September 2015. The Committee would like to thank Councillor Rowley and Ian Brooke for presenting this item. The Committee would also like to thank a public speaker for his useful contribution which helped to inform the Committee's questioning.
2. The Strategy had previously gone to the City Executive Board (CEB) at the pre-consultation stage so the Committee focused the majority of its discussion on how the City Council had responded to feedback received in the consultation.

Summary of the discussion

3. A public speaker said that compared to the population of Oxford 100 consultation responses was very low and questioned the methodology used. The public speaker also said that the consultation questions were very bland and questioned whether they represented a serious attempt to find out what people really want.
4. In response to a question about black and minority ethnic participation, the Community Services Manager said the consultation had also included meetings with representatives of community groups, Public Health, the County Sports Partnership, teachers and focus groups. The Committee heard that taken together, the data gathered provided a robust view. The Committee heard that the consistent message received in the consultation responses was that the Council could be better at communicating the leisure service offering.
5. In response to a question about the new Bungee mobile app for young people, the Committee heard that this had been schools-led and was something that could help with improving communication. The Committee questioned whether service users could use Council apps to book classes or crèches at leisure facilities and heard that this was not currently possible.

Recommendation 1 – That the City Council looks into extending the functionality of its mobile apps to enable leisure bookings.

6. The Committee also suggested that the strategy should include more emphasis on integrating leisure facilities with the city's broader leisure offer, which included anywhere that sport and physical activity could take place, such as community centres and community buildings such as schools, churches and village halls.

Recommendation 2 – That the City Council's Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy includes a greater emphasis on strengthening integration between leisure centres and the broader leisure offer, including community centres.

7. The public speaker also highlighted the Facilities Planning Model maps and noted that there was little or no difference in the 2014 and 2025 charts. The Committee heard that there was a severe lack of provision in the 'blue spaces'

(areas of the city not within 20 minutes walking time of one or more swimming pools). This included the area previously served by Temple Cowley Pools, which was where many of the Council's 'target groups' lived and had the greatest rate of population increase in the city. The Panel heard that many of the former users of Temple Cowley Pools, particularly the older users, had not switched to using the new facility at Blackbird Leys.

8. The Community Services Manager said that the Council had invested in facilities and that leisure centre usage had increased, especially amongst target groups. The Council had used Sport England models which showed that the city as a whole was well served for leisure provision. The Committee heard that lots of users of Temple Cowley Pools had transferred to Blackbird Leys, which was performing very well in terms of visitor numbers, some of whom were travelling in to the city. However, Temple Cowley Pools had been more accessible for some. The Council had recently invested in providing a new gym at Oxford Spires School, which was not yet accessible.
9. The Committee noted that the strategy contained no mention of the closure of Temple Cowley Pools, or of monitoring its impact. The Board Member said that the focus of the strategy was on the city as a whole, and while there was not a general gap in provision, the City Council would continue to monitor where gaps are identified.

Recommendation 3 – That the City Council continues to monitor the accessibility of leisure provision across Oxford, including in those parts of the city that have no swimming pools within a 20 walk, such as Littlemore and Cowley, and how this relates to leisure target groups (the Committee noted that corporate performance measure LP106: To increase participation at our leisure centres by target groups was below target for 2015/16 quarter 1).

10. The Committee also asked questions about private leisure centre usage, cycling, whether the targets for increasing leisure centre usage were viable and the financial cost of delivering the strategy. The Board Member said that providing an overall figure would be misleading, as some money had been budgeted for and other figures would be conjecture.

Further consideration

11. The Committee requested an update on facility running costs, including capital and revenue spend, following on from a scrutiny recommendation on the Fusion Lifestyle Performance 2013-2014 report, in June 2014.
12. The Committee later noted that a corporate performance measure - LP106: To increase participation at our leisure centres by target groups - was below target and wished to question how this related to evidence presented on Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy.

Name and contact details of author:-

Andrew Brown on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee
Scrutiny Officer
Law and Governance
Tel: 01865 252230 e-mail: abrown2@oxford.gov.uk

List of background papers: None
Version number: 1.0